Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

MHR Connections

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Term ends for three Commissioners

The final term of three Commissioners who have served on the Board for over ten years has come to an end. At a lunch hosted by the current Board of Commissioners and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, Minister of Justice and Attorney General Andrew Swan thanked the three for their years of dedication to human rights in Manitoba.

Ajit Deol, O.M. is a retired teacher and principal who came to Canada from India in 1967. Throughout her life she has committed herself to issues in education, social services and multiculturalism. She is a pillar of support for her Indo-Canadian community, a facilitator of intercultural understanding and was invested into the Order of Manitoba in 2002. She also was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal for her community service.

Ajit was appointed to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission in 2002 and proudly says that she never missed a Commission meeting. She has served on other prominent boards, including the Canadian Multiculturalism Council, promoting intercultural tolerance and understanding. She is a strong advocate for education and has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of students, especially the marginalized and disenfranchised, through better policies and governance.

The recognition for Ajit continues this spring when she will be awarded one of four honorary degrees at the University of Winnipeg's 2013 Spring Convocation. According to Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, University of Winnipeg President and Vice-Chancellor, the University recognizes outstanding Canadians who have contributed immensely to our communities through a shared commitment to philanthropy, education and volunteerism.

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THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

www.manitobahumanrights.ca

The Rights Connection
by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

The Commission's Facebook page is filled with gems of information that you typically will not be aware of unless you are specifically researching the topic. Here is one of those stories we stumbled upon and put on our Facebook page. For those who do not have access to facebook, I would like to tell the story again here.

Although typically service animals wear a vest which identifies them, sometimes the rules are relaxed. Bridget Evan's service dog, Hero, knows more than 40 commands, and is specifically trained to assist with her needs relating to spina bifada, such as pulling her wheelchair up ramps, picking up dropped items and turning off lights. Hero attended all of her classes.

This photo of Bridget Evan and Hero went viral.

The six-year-old chocolate Labrador escorted Bridget at the convocation ceremony of the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois, on May 11. Caps and gowns are a common sight this time of year, but when a dog in a cap and gown walked alongside a graduate in a wheelchair, they were greeted with smiles and the loudest applaud imaginable.

Historically service animals have been used by people with visual impairments. Service animals are now being trained to assist with a range of disabilities including assisting people with Attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, Autism spectrum disorder, and Post-traumatic stress disorder.

Check out our website for more detailed information about service dogs and service animals. We have a fact sheet about serviced dogs as well as a new guideline and policy about service animals.

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Robin Dwarka came to the Commission in 2001. Born in Trinidad, her parents left the West Indies and moved to Ottawa, searching for better opportunities for their three children.

Robin worked hard and received her Honours Commerce Degree from the University of Manitoba, followed by a Certified Management Accounting designation. Robin will always be remembered as the only Commissioner to play steel drums and continues to enjoy playing in a steel drum band today. She is a founding member of the local steel band, the Manitoba Panhandlers.

Her other passion is young people and she hosted many Commission youth conferences alongside Chairperson Jerry Woods.

The Council of Caribbean Organizations of Manitoba (CCOM) recognized Robin in 2011 for her many contributions to the development of the Caribbean community in Winnipeg. She is actively involved with Anansi, a school for the performing arts to promote the Caribbean culture through dance, music and drama to youth in Winnipeg.

As well as being a member of the steel band community for many years, Robin is also the Director of Finance for Legal Aid Manitoba.

Sheena Reed travelled from Flin Flon to attend the Commission's Board meetings and has a love for the north. After receiving her Arts Degree in Winnipeg and studying law, Sheena returned to Flin Flon and began working in social services where she remains today.

It is not surprising that Sheena attended as many northern youth conferences as she could since she was involved in Big Brothers, Big Sisters for many years has also has coached girls' gymnastics.

She is also a Board Member of the Northern Women's Resource Centre in Flin Flon, the Vice-President of the Flin Flon Friendship Centre's Board of Directors and the past President of the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres.

Unfortunately, after making all those long trips to Winnipeg to attend Board Meetings, Sheena was unable to attend her goodbye luncheon. The Commissioners and staff wish her, as well as the other two departing Commissioners, continued success.

Three new Board members have been appointed. They are John Burchill, Anne Lacquette and Sunny Chohan. Details will follow in subsequent bulletins.

Student shares her story at elementary schools

"Everyone has obstacles to overcome; some are more visible than others. Every experience in life shapes who you are, or who you will become," says Mindy Tucker, a student working for the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

Mindy Tucker is putting the final touches on her Respect Presentation.

Mindy is finalizing a presentation on human rights and respect for elementary school students. The goal is to help these young students to better understand human rights and the effects of discrimination. She will focus on disability and her personal experiences although the lesson is about respect for each other in general. Mindy says that she has gone through struggles and overcome barriers that others may not have faced but perhaps have witnessed.

"I have a message about rights and responsibilities for young people who are beginning to figure out who they are and who they will become," she says.

In her letter of introduction to those who will be fortunate enough to hear her speak, Mindy writes, "To put yourself out there is hard sometimes, and you may need a push to do it, but it can also be the greatest gift someone can give, if it leads you to who you really are. My past is my past, and yes I have a disability, but that is the last thing anyone should say about me. The first things are that I am a speaker, an educator, a difference maker and a survivor. I am Mindy Tucker and I look forward to sharing my story with the students."

For more information about Mindy's project please contact the Manitoba human Rights Commission.

The Disabilities Issues Office welcomed the Commission's new Executive Director Joan Braun by inviting organizers and leaders from Manitoba's disability community to meet with her at the Commission office earlier this week to discuss current human rights issues affecting Manitobans with disabilities. There was a spirit of collaboration for future discussions and initiatives. Joan is looking forward to meeting with other community groups in the future.

THE 12TH ANNUAL RUN FOR RIGHTS

http://runforrights.org/

Mark Saturday, June 1st 2013 on your calendar for the 12th Annual Run for Rights. You can walk, run, cycle, wheel or rollerblade. This event is a great way to exercise or warm up for the Manitoba marathon in support of social justice and human rights.